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Ferry Security Increased in Response to London Bombings

(SEATTLE) An act of terrorism in London on Thursday has prompted the Department of Homeland Security to raise the threat level from yellow to orange for mass transit systems. In response, the United States Coast Guard has heightened security measures affecting the Washington State Ferry system.

"We are taking precautionary and prudent steps to keep our citizens safe," Gov. Christine Gregoire said. "These measures will lead to more canine patrols and Washington State patrol troopers at our ferry terminals, heightened crew vigilance on board the ferries and increase on-the-water presence by the US Coast Guard," the Governor said. "It also means increased screening of large capacity vehicles."

"Based on the activities and terrorist trends we've seen around the world, it's in everyone's best interest to step up our maritime security measures," says Rear Admiral Jeffrey Garrett, Commander, 13th Coast Guard District.

"But it is best to be proactive as Washington is home to the largest ferry system in the nation and third largest in the world. We are also encouraging other passengers vessels to increase their security precautions and we encourage all citizens to be on the lookout for suspicious or unusual activity on or near our waterways," adds Garrett.

Since September 2001, and in response to the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002, members of the WSF Security Committee-comprised of Washington State Ferries, Washington State Patrol and the United State Coast Guard-have worked collaboratively to develop and implement an extensive security plan for the ferry system.

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“It is this collaborative effort that allows us to quickly and easily boost our security efforts,” says the Governor. “Public safety is our foremost concern.”

“Washington State Patrol is committed to using every resource available to keep ferry riders safe,” says Washington State Patrol Chief John Batiste.

“Every effort will be made to prevent any significant delay in ferry operations,” said Scott Davis, director of WSF Safety and Security. “Vehicle drivers should plan to arrive at the ferry terminals at least 30 minutes in advance of sailing to ensure that they can be screened prior to boarding. Late arriving vehicles may not be boarded. Large capacity vehicles may also be subject to additional scrutiny during this time.”

Passengers should report suspicious persons, objects or activities to a crewmember, a WSP Trooper or call the United States Coast Guard at 206.217.6232.

Examples of suspicious activities would include:

- Unusual photography of ferry operations.
- People displaying heightened interest in secure areas onboard the ferries.
- People critically observing ferry operations while taking notes or making computer entries.
- Customers leaving large packages or personal items unattended.

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